

Warden Message – U.S. Embassy, Quito, Ecuador

Changes in Voting Laws Makes Registering and Voting Overseas Simpler

July 19, 2010

The U.S. Embassy in Quito wishes to inform American citizens about recent improvements made to the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act that will make registering and voting simpler for American citizens abroad.

Some of the more important changes are listed below. For more information on the changes or voting from abroad, please visit the Federal Voting Assistance Program at:

<http://www.fvap.gov/>.

Also, the U.S. Embassy has available booklets and posters that work to help promote voting in the upcoming elections. If you would like personal copies or copies for your business, please write us at ACSQuito@state.gov.

The changes include:

- Giving all U.S. citizens who are overseas the ability to request and receive voter registration applications, absentee ballot request forms, and absentee ballots electronically if the voter so chooses.
- Requiring states to send out ballots **a minimum of 45 days** in advance of Election Day so overseas voters will receive them in time to vote. (If an overseas voter requests a ballot less than 45 days in advance of Election Day, the State must still send the ballot as expeditiously as possible, provided the ballot request is received by the State before the State's deadline.)
- Expanding the use of the Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot, or FWAB, a Federally-issued back-up ballot that any overseas voter can use if their ballot does not get to him or her in time. Under MOVE, the FWAB can now be used as a backup ballot by overseas voters ***in any general, special, primary, and run-off election for Federal office***. It is available at <http://www.fvap.gov/resources/media/fwab.pdf>.
- Allow overseas voters to confirm whether their ballot has been received by their State.
- **FAQs**
 - **How do I request a voter registration application? How do I request a ballot?**

- You have two options. First, you may obtain a voter registration application or absentee ballot request form from your local State election official. If you choose to receive your voter registration application and absentee ballot request form by requesting it from your State, your inquiries should be directed to your local State election office. This website contains links to the election office websites of all 50 States and the U.S. territories. Click on your State's link to get the contact information you need to request these materials. **Remember that all States are now required by law to allow overseas voters to request and receive their ballots electronically.** So you can now request and receive these materials by the simple click of a mouse. Remember to let your election officials know whether you want to receive your voting materials by mail or electronically.
- An alternative, efficient option would be to use the Federal Postcard Application, or FPCA, a Federally-issued combination voter registration application and absentee ballot request form that is available online. All States and U.S. territories are required by law to accept and process the FPCA in lieu of State-issued applications. The FPCA is available at <http://www.fvap.gov/resources/media/fpca.pdf>. You should download the form, fill it out, and send it in to your local State election official.
- **Where do I send my voter registration and absentee ballot request applications once I've filled them out?**
 - Both your voter registration application and absentee ballot request form (and similarly the Federal Postcard Application) should be completed and sent directly to your local election official. Some States allow voter registration applications to be sent back electronically. Check with your local election official to see if they accept these forms electronically in your State. Otherwise, you must send the materials to your local election official through the mail, so it is important to complete this step as soon as possible. If you have questions about this process, you should contact your local election official, the Federal Voting Assistance Program, or consult the U.S. embassy for more information.
- **When should I apply for my absentee ballot?**
 - It is best to apply in January of the year in which there is a regularly scheduled election for Federal office. Some States have very early primary elections, so it is important to apply for your ballot as soon as possible. Remember that MOVE requires States to send the ballot 45 days before Election Day only if the State receives your ballot request form 45 days prior. If a State receives your ballot request form after the 45 day mark, a State is still required to accept and process your ballot request form up to 30 days before Election Day (or may allow even more time if allowed under State law) and must send the ballot to you as expeditiously as possible. (Note that some States have extended the amount of time they will accept and process an absentee ballot from an overseas voter to later than the 30 days required by Federal law.)
 - For special or run-off elections, you should apply for your absentee ballot as soon as your State starts to accept them.
- **When should I expect my ballot?**

- The MOVE Act requires States to send out ballots a minimum of 45 days before Election Day. If you haven't received your ballot at least 4 weeks before the election, you should either contact your election official to check on the status of your request, or complete and submit the backup Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot (though you can submit the FWAB earlier if you choose to). Be sure to complete and return your absentee ballot regardless of when you receive it.
- **I requested my absentee ballot some time ago and I haven't received it yet. What do I do?**
 - You should email your election official to inquire about the status of your ballot and your registration status. If you can request a blank ballot to be sent to you electronically, you should try to do so.
 - You may submit a [back-up Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot](#) or "FWAB." In order to be eligible to use this back-up ballot, you must meet the following, minimum conditions. (1) You must submit the ballot outside the territorial bounds of the United States. (2) You must have applied for a regular ballot early enough to meet the State's deadline for receiving such ballot requests. Under Federal law, you have at least until 30 days before Election Day for your State to receive your absentee ballot request form. Some States have extended the deadline to give overseas voters even more time to submit a ballot request form. The FWAB is available at <http://www.fvap.gov/resources/media/fwab.pdf>. Hard copies of the FWAB are available at your U.S. embassy or consulate.
 - Read and follow the FWAB instructions carefully before completing and submitting the ballot. Also be sure to consult your State's election office website to ensure you have all necessary information, such as the appropriate election office mailing address and mailing deadlines.
- **How do I know whether my ballot was received by my State?**
 - Under MOVE, States are now required to develop a free access system, by which overseas voters can check to see if their ballots were received. States are free to develop this system in the way they see fit. This may be by providing this service online through their election office website, or by creating a toll-free number that the voter can call into to see if their ballot was received.
- **Can I register or vote in-person at the embassy or consulate?**
 - Currently, there are no procedures to vote in-person or to register on-site at U.S. embassies or consulates. However, U.S. embassy and consular officials are a great resource for questions about voting. They can assist U.S. citizens in completing the Voter Registration/Absentee Ballot Request form or other election materials for their State, witness election materials (if required), and provide other absentee voting information. Some jurisdictions are allowing voters to register to vote over the internet - that would be a quick method of ensuring overseas registration.
- **Helpful links:**
 - Federal Voting Assistance Program: <http://www.fvap.gov/>

- National Voter Registration form:
http://www.eac.gov/voter_resources/register_to_vote.aspx
 - U.S. Election Assistance Commission: <http://www.eac.gov>
 - Overseas Vote Foundation: <https://www.overseasvotefoundation.org/>
 - OVF on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/ythvoteoverseas>
 - OVF in Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Youth-Vote-Overseas/110570138939>
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Americans living or traveling in Ecuador are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration website <https://travelregistration.state.gov>, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Ecuador.

U.S. citizens should consult the [Country Specific Information](#) for Ecuador and the latest Travel Alerts and Warnings and Worldwide Caution at the Department's web site at <http://travel.state.gov>. Updated information on travel and security in Ecuador may also be obtained from the Department of State by calling 1-888-407-4747 within the United States or by calling 1-202-501-4444 outside the United States.

The U.S. Embassy in Quito is located at Avigiras E12-170 y Eloy Alfaro. The hours and telephone number for American Citizen Service enquiries is (011) 593-2-398-5000. Within the same city use the last seven digits. Add the city code for intercity telephone calls. Public call-in hours are Monday through Thursday 8:00 to 10:00 a.m. and Friday 10:00 to 11:00 a.m.

The U.S. Consulate General in Guayaquil is located at the corner of Avenida 9 de Octubre and Garcia Moreno (near the Hotel Oro Verde); telephone (011-593-4) 232-3570 during business hours (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) or 232-1152 for after-hours emergencies; fax (011-593-4) 232-0904. See the Consulate General web site at <http://guayaquil.usconsulate.gov/>.